

VZCZCXRO0796
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBW #1659 3471112
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 131112Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1884
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 001659

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

PM/WRA FOR MARK ADAMS

E.O. 12958: DECL 12/12/2017
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [MW](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: (C) SERBIA TO TRY TO GET MANPADS DESTRUCTION BACK ON TRACK
BEFORE BILATERAL DEFENSE CONSULTATIONS

REF: A) STATE 162123 B) BELGRADE 1509

Classified By: DCM Jennifer Brush, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

1. (C) Assistant Minister for Defense Dusan Spasojevic said the Government of Serbia would accept the U.S. interpretation of the bilateral agreement on the destruction of Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) and would fulfill the terms of their agreement. Spasojevic said that the MOD would identify new MANPADS for destruction and ship them to the destruction facility by December 17. Spasojevic looked forward to Bilateral Defense Consultations in Washington, later this month, but worried that domestic politics would sideline mil-mil relations for the coming months and reform momentum would slow. Despite Spasojevic's commitment, Post is uncertain that the MOD has the logistical capacity and political will to put the MANPADS destruction back on track in the near term. End Summary.

Serbia to Identify new MANPADS for Destruction

2. (C) Assistant Minister for Defense Dusan Spasojevic, in response to reftel points, on December 11 told Defense Attache and Poloff that he was committed to get the MANPADS contract "back on track." Spasojevic said he would have the Ministry identify an additional 720 MANPADs from Serbia's stockpiles and ship them to the Krusik company (a domestic company that has a contract with MOD for this and has performed previous MANPAD destruction) for destruction by December 17. This final complement would bring the total of missiles destroyed under the 2005 program to 5000, and fulfill the terms of Serbia's 2005 agreement with the United States. Spasojevic said he wanted to have the final shipment en route in time for his Bilateral Defense Consultations (BDC) in Washington, beginning December 17.

Upcoming Defense Consultations at an Important Moment

3. (C) Spasojevic said his visit to Washington was coming at a very important time given the decision regarding Kosovo status. Spasojevic said President Tadic had told him on several occasions that he wanted him to go to Washington for the consultations since Minister of Defense Sutanovac was unable to attend. (Comment: The President has told Cabinet officials they are not allowed to travel internationally indefinitely. End Comment.) Spasojevic said he was hoping to confirm meetings with Senator Inhofe and with House Foreign Affairs Committee staff. Spasojevic said he wanted "the visit to sound positive back in Serbia," upon his return to Belgrade on December 19. Referring to anti-Western rhetoric in Belgrade, he expressed concern that it would be difficult to maintain the mil-mil relationship if "politicians start screwing it up."

4. (C) Not all within the MOD share Spasojevic's commitment. Assistant Minister for Material Resources Ilija Pilipovic has told

the DATT in the past he was interested in expressing an interest in selling Serbia's stockpiled missiles on the open market where he expected to realize profits greater than the United States has agreed to pay for MANPADS destruction. Pilipovic had previously argued for reducing the number of weapons needed to satisfy the terms of the agreement by 720, the number he claimed had remained in Montenegro after the 2006 break-up of the Serbia-Montenegro State Union -- an argument that Spasojevic, at our insistence, dismissed. Nonetheless, on December 4, Pilipovic told the DATT that he would try to go to Montenegro the week of December 10 to convince the Government of Montenegro to return part of its stock of MANPADS to Serbia for this purpose.

Comment

¶5. (C) Despite Spasojevic's interest in honoring the MANPADs agreement, post has little reason to believe that others in the ministry share his optimism and that he will be able to make good on his commitment to finishing this job.. Post will continue to press the MANPADs issue with the MOD, and encourages Department interlocutors to raise the matter positively at the BDC. End
Comment.

MUNTER